

CLAIMS

1. A gaming system comprising:  
means configured to establish a trail comprised of a succession of trail  
5 elements of which at least one or more are associated with a prize,  
progression from one element to another along said trail being dependent  
upon the completion of tasks by a punter in the course of playing a game;  
means for determining, at the outset of a said game, the trail element  
to which the punter could progress in the course of playing the game; and  
10 means for controlling the provision of tasks for completion by the  
punter in the course of the game, said controlling means being configured to  
ensure that the punter is not provided with a number of tasks that, if  
completed, would enable the punter to progress to a trail element beyond that  
which the punter has been predetermined by said determining means to attain.  
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2. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said establishing means is  
configured to sub-divide said trail into groups of one or more trail elements.
3. A system according to Claim 2, wherein said groups of elements  
20 comprise at least one group which is not associated with a prize, and one or  
more prize winning groups that are each associated with a prize.
4. A system according to Claim 3, comprising a plurality of prize  
winning groups, wherein successive prize winning groups are associated with  
25 a prize that is more valuable than the prize associated with a preceding prize  
winning group.
5. A system according to Claim 4, further comprising a jackpot group  
comprised of one or more trail elements, said jackpot group being associated  
30 with a jackpot prize.
6. A system according to Claim 5, wherein: said trail is comprised of

seventeen elements (numbered 0 to 16), said non-prize winning group includes trail elements 0 to 3, said jackpot group includes trail element 16; and said prize winning groups comprise a first prize winning group including elements 4 to 7, a second prize winning group including elements 8 to 11, and  
5 a third prize winning group including elements 12 to 15.

7. A system according to Claim 6, wherein the prize associated the jackpot group is more valuable than the prize associated with the third prize group, the prize associated with the third prize group is more valuable than  
10 the prize associated with the second prize group; and the prize associated with the second prize group is more valuable than the prize associated with the first prize group.

8. A system according to any of Claims 5 to 7, wherein said jackpot  
15 comprises a fixed amount.

9. A system according to any of Claims 5 to 7, wherein said jackpot comprises a progressive jackpot.

20 10. A system according to any of Claims 7 to 9, wherein said prizes comprise a cash or credit amount.

11. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein said determining means comprises means for generating, at least substantially at random, a  
25 number that corresponds to the trail element to which the punter could potentially progress in the course of playing the game.

12. A system according to Claim 11, wherein said number generator is operable to generate a number from 0 to 16.  
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13. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein a said game is sub-divided into a number of levels, and said controlling means comprises

means for generating, at least substantially at random, a number that corresponds to the number of tasks to be provided for completion in the course of a level of the game.

5        14.     A system according to Claim 13 when dependent on any of Claims 3 to 11, wherein the number generator of the controlling means is configured, in an instance where the determining means has determined that the punter cannot progress beyond a trail element included within a non-prize winning group, to generate for each level a number which is less than the minimum  
10        number of tasks required to progress to a prize winning band.

15        15.     A system according to Claim 14, wherein the number generator is configured to generate a number from 0 to 3.

15        16.     A system according to Claim 13 when dependent on any of Claims 3 to 11, wherein the number generator of the controlling means is configured, in an instance where the determining means has determined that the punter could progress to an element included within a prize winning group, to ensure that the punter cannot progress by more than one prize winning group per level by  
20        generating a number which is less than the minimum number of tasks required to progress beyond the next successive prize winning group to a subsequent prize winning group.

25        17.     A system according to Claim 16, wherein the number generator is configured to generate a number from 0 to 7.

30        18.     A system according to Claim 16 and 17, wherein the number generator of the controlling means is configured, in the event that a punter has progressed to a trail element included within a group of trail elements that includes the element determined by the determining means as being the element to which the punter could potentially progress in the course of the game, to generate for each subsequent level a number which is less than the

minimum number of tasks required to progress to the next prize winning group.

19. A system according to Claim 18, wherein the number generator is  
5 configured to generate a number from 0 to 3.

20. A system according to any of Claims 13 to 19, wherein a punter is  
returned to the first element of a trail element group at the end of a level if  
said punter has not completed sufficient tasks to progress to the next trail  
10 element group.

21. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein a said punter who  
has completed one or more tasks and has qualified for a said prize is provided  
with an opportunity to collect said prize.

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22. A system according to any preceding claim, implemented by means of  
a computing resource and a game server, interconnected by means of a  
communications network.

20 23. A system according to Claim 22, wherein each of the computing  
resource and the game server include software operable, when executed in an  
execution environment, to implement one or more aspects of the functionality  
herein described.

25 24. A gaming system according to any preceding claim implemented in an  
arcade machine, an interactive television system (terrestrial or satellite), a  
mobile telephone or portable digital assistant, or a gaming console.

25. A method of controlling a gaming system, the method comprising:  
30 establishing a trail comprised of a succession of trail elements of  
which at least one or more are associated with a prize, progression from one

element to another along said trail being dependent upon the completion of tasks by a punter in the course of playing a game;

determining, at the outset of a said game, the trail element to which the punter could progress in the course of playing the game; and

5       controlling the provision of tasks for completion by the punter in the course of the game, said controlling means being configured to ensure that the punter is not provided with a number of tasks that, if completed, would enable the punter to progress to a trail element beyond that which the punter has been predetermined by said determining means to attain.

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26.   Computer program means comprising one or more software portions which, when executed in an execution environment, are operable to implement the steps of Claim 25.

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